

## **California State Service Plan**

### **Introduction:**

The State of California is fortunate to have a wide variety of national service and volunteer programs working to address the needs of our State and our local communities. The issues being addressed and the locations of these programs reflect the diversity of California. Both urban and rural communities are being served by national service participants and volunteers of all ages. The California Commission, known as the California Service Corps (CSC) plans to continue to leverage this civic engagement by coordinating and supporting the individuals, programs and organizations making a difference in their communities.

California will continue to provide opportunities for all to serve to the full extent of their talents and abilities. Particular attention will be focused on inclusion of people with disabilities in service. CSC will continue to convene its Disability Inclusion Task Force. The Task Force provides the foundation for an on-going collaborative relationship with the following agencies and organizations: the CNCS State Office, the California Department of Rehabilitation, the State Independent Living Centers, the Volunteer Centers of California, the UCLA and USC University Centers for Excellence (UCEDD), Advocates for Developmental Disabilities, and Goodwill Industries Benefits Specialists. The Task Force will continue to meet quarterly to foster specific activities for increasing the number of people with disabilities engaged in national and community service and volunteerism. CSC disability inclusion resources will continue to be used to maintain and/or improve the California Service Corps's website protocols for accessibility to individuals with disabilities. CSC staff, in conjunction with its disability partners, will review and approve all reasonable accommodation requests. The Task force will also continue to engage in regional disability inclusion partnerships to identify training needs related to disability inclusion and to provide training and technical assistance to disability organizations and national service programs.

### **Programmatic Areas of Focus:**

Because of its size, population and diversity, California does not focus its national service resources on any one programmatic area. California AmeriCorps programs are presently allocated among the major service areas in the following percentages: Education (52.52%); Human Needs (29.48%); Public Safety (13.32%) and Environment (4.67%). While California will continue to maintain a broad portfolio, it will also incorporate the Corporation's strategic focus areas and goals.

California will increase its efforts to mobilize more volunteers to address its many needs. The Corporation's report utilizing Bureau of Labor Statistics data has provided California with invaluable information on the present status of volunteering in our State. Presently only one in four Californians are volunteering, ranking us 40<sup>th</sup> among states over the last three years. For us to assist the Corporation in meeting its goal of 10 million new volunteers by 2010, California needs to recruit vast numbers of volunteers – as many as 250,000 new volunteers per year. To meet this goal we have developed an innovative tool to connect Californians with volunteer opportunities.

Primary to California's efforts is the launch of the California Volunteer Matching Network on September 26, 2006. Over the past two years, the CSC has been leading a development effort in partnership with Volunteer Centers, Hands On affiliates, United Way chapters, and other non-profits to design a network that will utilize technology and the expertise of volunteer connector organizations to more effectively connect Californians to volunteer opportunities in their local communities. This network will be the first of its scope in the nation.

As part of its launch, the California Volunteer Matching Network will include the following components:

- A brand new website ([www.californiavolunteers.org](http://www.californiavolunteers.org)) that will be developed and maintained by the California Service Corps and will include interactive content to encourage Californians to volunteer;
- A searchable database of quality-assured volunteer opportunities accessed through the new website;
- A network of Hub organizations (Volunteer Centers, Hands on Affiliates, etc.) that provide customer service to potential volunteers as well as non-profit organizations posting volunteer opportunities;
- Capacity to connect spontaneous volunteers generated in times of disaster with the relief and recovery organizations that need them; and,
- A statewide and coordinated local marketing campaign that drives visitors to the new website.

The database of volunteer opportunities is being built in partnership with Network for Good, and is modeled after a similar effort between the USA Freedom Corps and Network for Good.

Following the initial launch and marketing campaign, system enhancements will be built, including those focused on attracting particular demographics to the website and volunteering - Baby Boomers, seniors, and youth. Additionally, CSC will conduct focus groups with ethnic communities to build upon existing research and to inform strategies to increase rates of volunteering.

California will engage students of higher education in service. California Campus Compact has received a three-year, \$1.5 million grant from Learn & Serve America, Higher Education, to deepen and expand service-learning at college campuses throughout California, with a particular focus on community partnerships that reach youth from disadvantaged situations. Learn & Serve's CalServe Initiative will continue to increase the number of K-12 school, districts and county office of education that use service-learning as an educational strategy and to increase youth service. These efforts meet dual strategic goals of mobilizing more volunteers and engaging students in communities. Additionally, California will utilize a State holiday as a focus for youth volunteering. California has designated March 31 as Cesar Chavez Day to honor the life and values of the labor and civil rights leader. The legislature has charged the CSC with designing and overseeing a

program that will engage K-12 students in service in honor of Chavez. The CSC is developing a program that engages middle-school students in year-round service clubs to address issues they identify in their communities. The service clubs will be placed in low-performing and Title I schools, thereby addressing the Corporation's target of engaging youth in at-risk environments in national service. VISTA members will support these service clubs by providing training to after-school supervisors and by helping the youth gather the resources needed to implement their service projects. Service-learning students from local colleges and universities will be recruited to assist with the service clubs, thereby addressing the strategic goal of engaging students in communities. Students, parents and the larger community will be recruited to participate in large scale service projects on the actual holiday. These large scale service projects will garner attention to demonstrate the power and effectiveness of service in addressing community needs.

The California Commission was charged by the California legislature to create a state master plan to increase the number of older Californians who actively serve their communities through high quality intensive service opportunities. The Commission is working with individuals and organizations across the state to focus not only on baby boomers but also on the wider range of older Californians who seek ways to contribute to the public good. Scheduled to be released in 2006, this *California Aging Opportunity Plan* includes recommendations for programs, policies and pathways for state action and leadership. California intends to implement these recommendations through the Volunteer Matching Network, an AmeriCorps initiative utilizing baby boomers to meet the needs of California's youth in after-school programs, and other strategies to weave older adult service throughout state policy and programs.

The AmeriCorps After-school Enhancement Partnership (AEP) initiative will not only meet the Corporation's strategic goal of increasing baby boomer volunteers, but it will also meet the goal of ensuring a brighter future for all youth. Sites selected for this initiative will be Title I, low-income schools. Members will improve the ratio of caring adult to children in these programs. This initiative is an example of an opportunity to partner with private sector funders. CSC worked with private funders in the development of the initiative which also provides a regional infrastructure to disseminate best practices among after-school programs. California will continue to explore similar opportunities in the future.

California will continue to sustain excellence in the management of national service resources. By careful selection and on-going support, California programs will deliver solid performance while assuring the highest level of accountability for the use of public funds. California has used planning grants to cultivate new programs and to support them in the development of management systems and program designs. In addition to planning grants, California supports all service programs with its annual summer training conference. In 2006 this training conference included not only AmeriCorps programs but also all CNCS funded programs and volunteer center staff and was called United in Service. California will continue to look for opportunities to share technical assistance and training opportunities with the broader service and volunteer community.

In addition to furthering the Corporation's strategic goals, California programs are also aligned with initiatives of our Governor. Governor Schwarzenegger and First Lady Maria Shriver have created initiatives to increase disaster and emergency preparedness as well as volunteering by California families. To address the issue of emergency preparedness, CSC has initiated a project utilizing AmeriCorps\*VISTA members to coordinate preparedness workshops in low-income communities and with vulnerable populations. The VISTA members, placed in Red Cross Chapters, local volunteer centers and with local government response agencies, will work with AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs to recruit workshop participants and to present the information. Through its Disaster and Emergency Management Unit, the CSC will develop, strengthen and enhance volunteer programs through its Citizen Corps councils and programs (i.e., Fire Corps, Medical Reserve Corps, Community Emergency Response Team, Volunteers In Police Service, and the Neighborhood Watch Program) and its partner programs (i.e., Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster). The CSC has been designated by State Executive Order to take the lead in ensuring the effective coordination of volunteer support activities related to disaster response, relief and recovery for all of California.

CSC is also being considered in legislation to house a California Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives. Potential roles for that office include serving as a clearinghouse for state and federal funding opportunities and supporting non-governmental disaster response, relief and recovery. The office might be involved in addressing policy and administrative issues that create barriers to social serving nonprofits as well as clarifying California Church/State rules. An important role for this office would be to increase volunteering and build volunteer management capacity as well as identifying and outreach to intermediary organizations and developing non-contractual public-private partnerships.

### **Collaborating with and Convening of Service and Volunteer Community:**

The CSC will continue playing a vital convening role among national service and volunteer service stakeholders. Among those efforts are the regular convenings of the California Service Alliance (CSA) and the less frequent but much larger United in Service conferences.

CSA is an alliance of 16 statewide organizations, working together to build a better and more secure future for California by mobilizing Californians, at every stage of their lives, in meaningful service and volunteer opportunities. CSA was originally convened in 1997, as the State Network Leadership Team, to help build regional-level capacity to advance service and volunteer programs and practices. In 2004, the group became CSA and adopted a broader set of goals. CSA builds on the past work of service and volunteer practitioners and advocates who have come together in different venues and at different times to explore how best to advance the ethic and practice of service and volunteerism in California. The Alliance fosters collaboration and mutual learning, communicates the value of service to more Californians, provides more high quality opportunities to serve, and coordinates policy efforts to enhance service, volunteering and mentoring in every corner of the state.

CSA has provided valuable leadership, guidance and expertise in many efforts and projects, including the shaping of the Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning, California's second Unified State Plan, the California Volunteer Matching Network and a plan for senior service in the state.

CSA's membership includes AmeriCorps\*NCCC; California AmeriCorps Alliance; California Association of Local Conservation Corps; California Association of Nonprofits; California Association of Senior Service Corps Directors; California Campus Compact; California Conservation Corps; California Service Corps; California Department of Education, CalServe Initiative; California State University Chancellor's Office; Corporation for National and Community Service, California State Office; Foundation for California Community Colleges; Volunteer Centers of California; and Youth Service California.

**Potential Non-monetary Support by the Corporation:**

The Corporation has already helped California by providing valuable information to inform our planning. The "Volunteering in America" report analyzing the data of the Bureau of Labor Statistics is very helpful. California would encourage the Corporation to continue updating and expanding that information. We would also welcome the opportunity to work with the Corporation in developing resources to meet the goals of the strategic plan.

California joins with the Corporation in expecting measurable outcomes from our programs. We would welcome participation in a working group to explore the parameters of program evaluation requirements. California applauds the resources accessible among the technical assistance providers of the Corporation, such as the addition of fresh topics and providers like Temple University and Public Allies, Inc. The new service in the area of conference planning will be a great tool for our State. While the Resource Center website is also a valuable resource for California programs, we would offer our insight in the selection of technical assistance providers and in vetting the materials posted on the website.

Because of our experience with frequent disasters and emergencies, California has a keen interest in the utilization of service programs and volunteers in disaster preparation and response. We would like to work with the Corporation in developing ways of expanding the role of our volunteers and service programs in meeting these needs.

All of these efforts require resources. California could benefit from access to local contacts of the Corporation's national funding partners. By working together on the local, state and national levels we will be able to achieve our common goals.